

Catalina souvenir teaspoons: some notes on embossed (die-struck) bowl designs by manufacturers

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This remains a work in progress. It makes no claim to being a comprehensive survey of all the embossed bowls of Catalina Island souvenir teaspoons. So far, I have encountered 14 different embossed bowl designs, featuring views of Avalon Bay, on sterling teaspoons produced by eight different U.S. manufacturers. A fifteenth embossed teaspoon bowl design, by an unidentified manufacturer, has also been observed, but so far only on a copper souvenir teaspoon.

Dating of the Avalon Bay embossed bowl designs

Evidence for the dating of the embossed bowl designs comes from the particular features depicted on the bowl itself and from the other attractions featured on the spoon, as well as from occasional monogram dates. In my experience the first embossed Avalon scene bowls must have appeared in the very first years of the 20th century. The earliest independently “dated” design I have encountered, thus far, is the Paye and Baker Type 1 design. Examples display inscribed dates of “5-26-03” and “1903”. This design likely first appeared sometime between 1901, Paye and Baker’s founding, and mid-1903. Similarly the Watson Type 1 bowl design almost certainly dates to the turn of the 20th century. Features of the depiction of the Hotel Metropole and the general state of Avalon’s vegetation suggest a date of ca. 1899 +/- a year or so. Most of the remaining embossed bowl designs produced by other manufacturers typically occur on some generic California themed, floral themed or eclectic pattern teaspoon of varying ages, or on spoons whose Catalina attractions suggest design dates of later than mid-1905.

Captions on embossed bowls by manufacturer

E.L. Deacon Jewelry Co.	“Avalon, Santa Catalina Isl Cal”
Fessenden & Co.	“Catalina Island. Cal.”
J. Mayer & Bros. (3 types)	“Avalon Bay Catalina Island”
Paye and Baker Mfg. Co. (3 types)	“Catalina Island. Cal.”
C.M. Robbins Co.	“Avalon”
Shepard Mfg. Co. (2 types)	“Avalon, Santa Catalina Island.”
H.H. Tammen Curio Co.	“Avalon Bay, Catalina Island Cal.”
Watson/Mechanics Type 1	“Avalon, Catalina Island.”
Type 2	“Avalon Catalina Island”

Observed only on a copper teaspoon

Unidentified maker #1	“Avalon Bay, Catalina Island Cal.”
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Survey of embossed bowl designs

Eugene L. Deacon Jewelry Co. (E.L.D.)



The design features an unusual eastward looking view of Avalon harbor. Shows the expanded Bath House complex in detail and just a single main pier. Displays a very detailed image of the western end of Avalon.

The complex Bath House structures appear in a similar photo published in late 1903, suggesting a design date as early as 1903, or perhaps even earlier is possible.

An example monogrammed "1913" has been observed.

Fessenden & Co.



The lettering and overall design is very similar to Paye and Baker's "engraving like" Type 1 embossed bowl design. However, the Fessenden design has an overly large (Little) Sugarloaf Rock. Exhibits the pre-1909 single main pier.

Design likely early years of the first decade of the 20th Century, possibly the same age as P&B Type 1?

Joseph Mayer and Bros.

Mayer Type 1



Diagnostic feature: exaggerated serifs on the first and last "A"s in each word. Thus far, only found on a Mayer figural fish spoon, which displays the S.S. Cabrillo, launched in 1904, and the Pilgrim Club, likely completed in early 1905. The scene shows the small Bath House pier and a relatively complex Sugarloaf Point configuration.

Designed probably ca. 1905- early 1906

Mayer Type 2



Exhibits a slightly more engraving-like than photographic appearance. Shows the pre-1909 single pier along with the smaller western pier associated with the Bath House. The Dance Pavilion and auxiliary tent are shown in the left foreground. A simple box-like Hotel Metropole is shown with a plain roofline (pre- early 1902). The Sugarloaf Point configuration is ambiguous.

Design ca. 1900 +/- 2? - Potentially earlier than either Types 1 and 3. (An example with a monogrammed date, "3-16-11", has been observed.)

Mayer Type 3



Diagnostic feature: a distinctive serif on the first "A" in Avalon and on both staffs of the "N"s in "Catalina Island". The scene shows a relatively complex Sugarloaf Point configuration, and the post 1902 dormered roofline of the Hotel Metropole.

Design date – problematic - pre-1905?

Paye and Baker Mfg. Co.

Two different embossed bowl designs appear on Paye and Baker marked spoons. The Type 1 design almost certainly predates that of Type 2. The rectilinear lettering and linear sketching of the scene displayed in Type 1 closely resembles the linear appearance of an engraving, which likely was the designer's prototype. The authorship of the Type 1 design remains ambiguous. While regularly observed on Paye and Baker spoons, and figured in their 1908 catalog, an example of a Simmons and Paye (Paye and Baker's predecessor) marked Daphne pattern spoon with a Type 1 embossed bowl has been observed, suggesting the design may have originated with Simmons and Paye, pre 1901. That observation may also be supported by the observation of an engraved Avalon scene bowl generally similar in appearance to the Type 1 design on a Simmons and Paye marked spoon. A P&B marked spoon with a Type 1 bowl is monogrammed "5-26-03". The Type 2 design has a more refined appearance with wavy style lettering which is also characteristic of Watson's later Type 2 design. Type 1 bowls are far more common than Type 2 bowls.

Paye & Baker Type 1



Notable for its detailed engraving-like appearance. Displays the early original Sugarloaf Point configuration. Hotel Metropole is shown without distinctive detail.

Design predates mid- 1903, and if the bowl embossing on the observed Simmons and Paye Daphne pattern spoon was undertaken contemporaneous with Simmons and Paye's operation, then a date of 1900 or earlier is likely.

Paye & Baker Type 2



Curiously the Hotel Metropole does not appear to show its post-1902 dormered roofline. Pre 1906 Sugarloaf configuration.

Design date is uncertain, but the scene is certainly consistent with a pre-1906 view.

Paye & Baker Type 3



Observed on both demitasse spoons and on "close to a teaspoon size", (ca. 5") spoons.

The overall similarity to the P&B Type 1 design suggests this design was merely the demitasse equivalent of the larger early design, ca. 1901 to mid-1903.

C.M. Robbins Co.

This bowl design features a view of Avalon Bay, ca. 1910 to 1915. It is captioned "Avalon" and features two large main piers and the Bath House complex and exhibits Sugarloaf Point before Big Sugarloaf was blasted away to make room for the first casino which was eventually built on it's site. The harbor is shown with two steamers, and multiple smaller boats including sailboats. Holly Hill House, the Amphitheatre and the Angel's Flight funicular railway line are shown and the trees in the foreground are shown as quite mature.



Observed on a C.M. Robbins figural fish spoon (Design W 436).

Design ca. 1910-1915

Shepard Mfg. Co.

The Shepard designs display very distinctive lettering with serifs. Spoons with this embossed pattern are sometimes marked with a Shepard maker's mark, but more commonly are unmarked.

Shepard Type 1



Shepard Type 1 shows the earlier single main pier and includes the smaller western pier at the Bath House. The Hotel Metropole shows its distinctive post early 1902 roofline. An early simple steamship in a relatively empty harbor is depicted. Only the very top of the Pavilion is shown in the left foreground.

Design likely ca. 1902-1904. Appears on a spoon inscribed with a 1906 date.

Shepard Type 2



The Shepard Type 2 scene is extremely detailed. It shows a post-1909 view with 2 main piers and the Bath House. The steamer is relatively more modern and a paddlewheel glass bottom boat is included. Numerous small boats are shown lining the shore. The Hotel Metropole is still featured.

Design post-1909, pre 1915.

Cindy Kern had a California Big Letter spoon and fork set she bought 30 years ago. Fork was monogrammed 9/29/14. If it were an original period set, Type 2 was in use by 1914.

H.H. Tammen Curio Co.



This is one of only three embossed bowl designs which clearly depicts the "Angel's Flight" railway. And one of only three designs to show the two main piers and the Bath House complex. The stagecoach road is clearly shown on the far hillside.

The design is clearly post-1909, and probably before the great Avalon fire of November, 1915, as the distinctive Hotel Metropole is showcased.

Watson Co. (and Mechanics Sterling Co.)

Watson Type 1



Avalon from a slightly different perspective than most embossed bowls with westward looking views of the harbor. It shows the pre-1909 single main pier, includes the Bath House pier and the Dance Pavilion with its auxiliary tent. Sugarloaf Rock is not shown, while the original Sugarloaf Point configuration is shown. Holly Hill House is not shown.

The scene shows a great similarity to an early photo of Avalon, "G&M" Photo #305, regrettably imprecisely dated to "ca. 1900". On balance, the features depicted suggest the design dates to between ca. 1898 and the first two years of the 20th century.

Watson Type 2



Shows the pre-1909 extended single main pier and a small part of the Dance Pavilion (left foreground). Holly Hill House and Sugarloaf Rock are now included. The steamship looks a bit more modern and the caption's lettering now includes serifs and is arranged in a wavy line. The scene also includes a small short pier just east of the main pier.

The model for this design was very likely the image displayed on an M. Rieder, Publ. photo postcard (#7025), which has been observed with postmarked dates as early as 4/25/1904. This photo was probably taken sometime in the summer of 1903, based on comparison with earlier dated postcards.

Monogrammed dates of "08", "1909" and "7-28-10" have been observed on Watson spoons with this embossed bowl. A design date ca. 1904 to 1906 seems most likely.

Unidentified maker #1

The observed example is a copper teaspoon. It displays the same caption used by the H.H. Tammen Curio Co., but the overall layout and design of the scene is very different. The scene is post 1909, and likely pre 1917 and includes Angel's Flight and the Amphitheatre, one of two designs to clearly show the latter structure. Also noteworthy is the observation that Tammen frequently used a "badge" style frame around an image of state seals, or other iconic identifiers on their spoons.



Revised: 8/18/2021

Addendum: Notes on embossed Avalon Bay scene coffee spoon (demitasse) bowl designs.

This section is still “under construction”. I haven’t systematically surveyed Catalina souvenir coffee spoons for examples of embossed bowl designs. The observations below are preliminary, based on the bowls I have observed while surveying embossed teaspoon bowl designs.

In my experience only a few of the most prominent Catalina spoon manufacturers made embossed bowl designs for their smaller coffee or demitasse spoons. These include J. Mayer and Bros., Paye & Baker, the Shepard Manufacturing Co. and the Watson Co.

J. Mayer and Bros.

Type 1



Essentially similar in layout to the Type 2 Mayer & Bros. embossed teaspoon bowl design, however the detail is considerably simplified. Neither the Metropole Hotel nor the Pavilion is clearly shown. The Sugarloaf Point configuration is curious, as it appears Little Sugarloaf is connected to the point. Only small boats are shown in the harbor.

Type 2



The caption “Avalon Bay Catalina, Cal.” is different than the standard “Avalon Bay Catalina Island” found on all other Mayer embossed bowls. Also notable for the depiction of two large steamers. Details of Avalon town highly simplified, with no identifiable structures. The Sugarloaf Point depiction shows its pre 1906 configuration.

Paye and Baker

Type 1



The bowl design with the engraving-like Avalon scene and the caption "Catalina Island Cal." is essentially a miniature version of the common Paye and Baker Type 1 and Type 3 teaspoon bowl designs. It differs only in minor points including punctuation of the caption and in the presence of a small sailboat in the harbor.

Shepard Manufacturing Co.

The Shepard Manufacturing Co. produced two Avalon scene bowls designs for their coffee spoons. These were essentially mirrors of their two teaspoon bowl designs, one a pre 1909 view and the other a post 1909 view of the bay.

Type 1



This design primarily differs from Shepard's Type 1 teaspoon design in that the Metropole Hotel is shown with the early pre-1902 roofline, whereas the teaspoon design shows the dormers added to the East Wing during the winter of 1901/02. This may suggest the coffee spoon design preceded the first teaspoon sized embossed bowl design. If so, this design may date to 1901 or even earlier. This interpretation may also be supported by the absence of a building shown along the shoreline west of the Bath House complex, dating to ca. 1902-3, which is clearly shown in the teaspoon version.

Type 2



The Shepard Type 2 scene is extremely detailed. It shows a post-1909 view with 2 main piers and the Bath House. The steamer is relatively more modern and numerous small boats are shown lining the shore. The Hotel Metropole is still featured. *Design post-1909, pre 1915.*

Watson Co.

The Watson Co. produced two embossed bowl designs for their coffee spoons, one of which was the standard northeastern view across Avalon Bay and the other was a close-up view of Sugarloaf Rock. This Sugarloaf Rock scene, curiously, was not duplicated in a teaspoon sized design by any manufacturer, as far as I am aware.

Type 1



Post early 1902 view of Avalon, with the Metropole Hotel identifiable. Lacks Pavilion, but numerous small boats and Hermosa-like steamer shown in the harbor. The design appears to show the Pacific Wireless transmission station on the far hillside suggesting a date of 1903 or later.

Type 2



Sugarloaf Rock with a steamer shown to the left. Interesting in that most postcards and engraved teaspoon bowl scenes always show the steamer on the right. (*The earliest postcard I've encountered with a steamer on the right is copyrighted 1902, and it seems the model for most engraved teaspoon bowl scenes.*) Design date uncertain.

Revised: 12/4/21